

Jack. Is that clever?

Algernon. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

Jack. I am sick to death of cleverness.

Everybody is clever nowadays. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance.

I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

Algernon. We have.

Jack. I should extremely like to meet them.

What do they

talk about?

Algernon. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

Jack. What fools!

Algernon. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about

your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

Jack. [In a very patronizing manner] My dear

fellow, the truth

isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined

girl. What extraordinary ideas you have

about the way to

behave to a woman!

Algernon. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love

to her, if she is pretty, and to some one else, if she is plain.

Jack. Oh, that is nonsense!

Algernon. What about your brother? What about the profligate

Ernest?

Jack. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of

him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy.

Lots of people

die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

Algernon. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort

of thing that runs in families. You had much

better say a

severe chill.

Jack. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything

of that kind?

Algernon. Of course it isn't!

Jack. Very well, then* My poor brother Ernest is carried off

suddenly, in Paris, by a severe chill. That

gets rid of him.

Algernon. But I thought you said that . . . Miss

Cardew was

a little too much interested in your poor

brother Ernest?

Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

Jack. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly romantic girl,

I am glad to say. She has got a capital

appetite, goes long

walks, and pays no attention at all to her

lessons.

Algernon. I would rather like to see Cecily.

Jack. I will take very good care you never do.

She is excessively

pretty, and she is only just eighteen.